TSR RPGA™
© 1980 TSR Hobbies Inc.
All Rights Reserved
Volume 2, Number 1
Issue #4
SECRET

"Where and when is the GEN CON® East Convention? I heard it was in New Jersey, but now I hear Philadelphia. What's right?"

— KE, Pennsylvania

The GEN CON® East game convention will be held at Widener College, Chester, PA on June 17-20, 1982. *It was moved from Cherry Hill, NJ (the site we had reported earlier) because of problems with staff. It'll have the ONLY official AD&D™ tournaments in the northeast this year: the RPGA™ AD&D™ tournament and the AD&D Open, plus the RPGA meeting, AD&D Q&A sessions, and special guests Gary Gygax and Duke Seifried (formerly of Heritage Models). Hope to see you there!*

CONTENTS

FEATURES

Fighter Coming Around A Corner
Willingham art 2
THE POLYHEDRON
*The **new** Newsletter* 3-16

REGULARS

Cover 1
Letters 2

LETTERS

"I greatly enjoyed the interview with Jim Ward, for it did capture much of the essence of that Stalwart. However, you did not tell all about his Chaotic nature! What about those Friday night games at my place where Jim and Mike Gray vied for the Unexpected Action Award? Be it D&D®gaming, a STAR FRONTIERS™ game playtest, or anything else, James M. delivers an element of pure uncertainty to group play — and he loves doing it, too!

"One other minor point: Jim didn't really relate just how we met. Actually, I accosted him with a line something similar to this: "Do you really enjoy reading books like that?" as I pointed to the stack of fantasy and SF paperbacks he'd amassed. Jim, looking askance, replied defensively: "Why yes, I do!" and then tried to turn away so as to escape this overly-intimate boor as rapidly as possible. Hastening so as not to lose a potential gamer, I then said, "We play games which are more enjoyable than swords & sorcery novels; why not stop by sometime and try them out? We have a good group..." Anyway, as Jim stated, he didn't actually take me up on the offer for a couple of weeks. My personal opinion is that during the interim he was checking up to find out if we were merely eccentric or actually dangerous lunatics. Before the D&D game became famous, recruiting hobbyists *was* chancey work, which left one open to considerable speculation regarding maturity and sanity. Now everyone knows the truth...

— E. Gary Gygax, Wisconsin

See, folks, he really reads this stuff! Seriously, Gary is one of our foremost fans, as of course we are of his (I think that came out right). Though the examples in the introduction did not fully illustrate Jim's Chaotic Good nature, he is indeed a classic model of such behavior. And the sanity of people like he and Gary and I, manipulating universes for our own pleasure, has long been obvious.

"I'm making plans to have a D&D DM Seminar to teach people the necessary skills for becoming effective Dungeon Masters. Could you give me a list of excellent DMs who might enjoy teaching at an event of this kind?"

— TW, Ohio

We're still compiling the results of hundreds of evaluations from RPGA tournament players and DMs. We should be able to release a list of them, and their comparative ratings, after this year's convention season. Interestingly enough, we're also considering starting Official D&D Camps! In a modern one-week "camp" situation (actually held on a college campus or similar civilized facility) we could teach D&D methods for players and DMs along with typical camp activities — recreation, dorm living and meals, camp picture, and so forth. We'll keep you informed of any developments, but nothing will happen until 1983.

"After the success of last year's D&D camp, we have scheduled two one-week sessions for this summer: July 11-16 and 18-24. Could you visit for a day this year as you did last?"

— Dr. Keith Kraus, Pennsylvania

Sure! I had a great time at the camp last year, and plan to return this summer. Interested readers should contact Dr. Kraus at Shippensburg State College, Shippensburg, PA 17257. He runs an excellent camp with experienced help at an attractive campus in central Pennsylvania. Though it's not an official camp (there aren't any, yet) it's a well-run event and a great time for all.

"How much should dice cost? The local store charges $1.25 each, and I think they're ripping us off. How can we straighten this out?"

— RH, Benton, TX

If the numbers are inked in, the price is OK. If they're plain, you're right; you're being shafted. Try going to conventions; there are always good deals to be had from dealers and distributors. Mail order works, too; there aren't any RPGA dice, but TSR's Dungeon Hobby Shop (POB 765, Lake Geneva, WI 53147) sells merchandise by mail. Gamescience does a lot of mail order and has a wide selection of dice (01956 Pass Road, Gulfport, MS 39501) as does The Armory (4145 Amos Ave., Baltimore, MD 21215). Write for catalogs.

© 1980 TSR Hobbies Inc. All Rights Reserved

Volume 2, Number 1 Issue #4

The POLYHEDRON

The Polyhedron

Volume 2, Number 1

RPGA™ Newsletter #4

Publisher:
E. Gary Gygax

Editor:
Frank Mentzer

Contributing Editors:
Bill Hoyer
Mary Kirchoff
Tom Robertson

Cover Artist:
Larry Elmore

Contributing Artists:
Bruce Weigle (pg. 9)
Todd Oleck (pg. 14)
Steven Sullivan (pg. 12,13)
Jean Wells (pg. 8, 15)
Bill Willingham (pg. 10)

Other credits:
Photo (pg. 5) courtesy of Grenadier Models
Photos (pg. 6,7) courtesy of Gary L. Jaquet
Cartoon (pg. 16) by Roger Raupp

The POLYHEDRON (the official newsletter of TSR's ROLE PLAYING GAME ASSOCIATION™ Network) is published bi-monthly by TSR Hobbies, Inc. The mailing address is POB 509, Lake Geneva, WI 53147; telephone number (414) 248-3625.

The POLYHEDRON welcomes unsolicited submissions of written material and artwork. However, no responsibility for such submissions can be assumed by the publisher in any event. No submissions will be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope of sufficient size.

The POLYHEDRON is mailed free to all RPGA™ members. Membership rates: 1 year $10; 2 years $18; 5 years $40; Lifetime $200. All prices are subject to change without notice. Changes of address for the delivery of subscriptions must be received at least 30 days prior to the effective date of the change in order to insure uninterrupted delivery.

All material published in The POLYHEDRON becomes the exclusive property of the publisher upon publication, unless special written arrangements to the contrary are made prior to publication.

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, D&D, ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS and TOP SECRET are registered trademarks owned by TSR Hobbies, Inc. GEN CON® and RPGA™ are service marks owned by TSR Hobbies, Inc. "™" designates other trademarks owned by TSR Hobbies, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

CONTENTS

FEATURES

Convention Update
The latest news from the East Coast 4
NAME CONTEST Finishes! 4
GRENADIER
Reprinted from the Grenadier Bulletin 5
INTERVIEW with ***"Jake" Jaquet***
Starting a 3-part series 6
Spelling Bee: Evocations
Continuing our AD&D™ series 12
*BASIC*ally Speaking
A new D&D® BASIC column by Jon Pickens 14
NOR
Our new cartoon series by Roger Raupp 16

REGULARS

Where I'm Coming From 5
White Rabbits 11
Turnbull Talking
Reprinted from the D&D PA Newsletter 11
Notes For The Dungeon Master 13
Dispel Confusion 14
Notes From HQ 15

Surprise!

Ta-ta! Welcome to "Polyhedron," which means "a solid bounded by many plane faces." We use many different polyhedra in our games, of course, and the RPGA Network is a Polyhedron, too: a solid group, bounded by the many games.

Back to normal size, but now bi-monthly. We're a bit late (as always!) (quiet, back there) *but getting there; we've got a new editor, Mary Kirchoff, so production should speed up.*

Welcome to Elmore cover art, Roger Raupp's NOR, a new D&D BASIC column, and the usual throng of regulars. Enjoy! Save vs. delight.

Frank Mentzer

GEN CON® EAST GAME CONVENTION GETS NEW TIME & PLACE

The GEN CON East Game Convention will be held at Widener College, Chester, PA on June 17-20. A full slate of RPGA activities is scheduled. The Dealer's area is being filled by Invitation Only (to them, not to you) to provide the best selection of games and accessories for visitors. The Guest of Honor is E. Gary Gygax; Special Guest is Duke Seifried, formerly of Heritage Models; other Featured Guests include Frank Mentzer and Bill Hoyer (RPGA Staff), TSR designers Dave Cook, Allen Hammack, and Harold Johnson, "Jake" Jaquet, Jim Ward, and many more!

Events wanted! A special drawing will be held, open only to those who run events, for valuable prizes. For more information about the GEN CON East game convention, write to POB 756, Lake Geneva, WI 53147.

NAME CONTEST RESULTS

As you've seen by now, the new name for the RPGA Newsletter is ***Polyhedron.*** It was submitted by:

Bill Huber *of*
Petaluma, California

Our thanks to everyone for the suggestions! We got lots of good ones, including the following favorites: Role Players Guide to Adventure, Mercury, Multiverse, Roles & Rules, and Dice Roles. On the other hand, we got some like Game-A-Lot, Readings Gathered for Personality Assimilation, Quasit, The Sage's Pages... either too fantasy-oriented, too long, or several (which we won't mention) just plain awful. That's the way it goes.

As promised, Bill gets a two-year membership extension and his choice of any one of the first four RPGA modules.

WHERE I'M COMING FROM

by Frank Mentzer

Been thinking about starting a few projects for you. Would you like to get the AD&D® hard-cover book covers in color poster form, without the letters? Possible, but not soon. Ever use full-scale maps, to move figures around on? I've found a nice dwarven dungeon, all drawn in good detail to scale, 5 levels deep, drawn on big paper (roughly 24" x 30"); about 6 sheets per level, for about $10 a level. I'll have some to show at the upcoming conventions. They're really nice pieces for putting up somewhere, coloring, and of course for use in games.

Dropped in on Gary the other day and started complaining about the loopholes, variants and so forth in Len Lakofka's new clerical spells. Well, it turns out that they're NOT in final form; the spells are Official, but not complete. More news on that later.

On the other hand, Gary's cranked out some really nice cantrips. Those are apprentice magic-user spells, low power stuff but very useful. You can take 4 instead of a first level spell, and if you're Chaotic, you've got a whole new set of tools, so to speak. BULLETIN: Watch for full details on spell books — materials, weights, costs, Illusionists, everything — in an upcoming SORCERER'S SCROLL column in DRAGON™ magazine.

You want detailed articles on other games? Jon Pickens, long-time gamer and TSR editor (as well as regular player in my AD&D campaign) has started a series on the D&D BASIC rules, starting this issue. Also new is Roger Raupp's NOR, which I really like. Do you?

You won't see articles on lots of new topics or games until we find people to write about them. Allen Hammack is tops around here with the TOP SECRET® rules, but he's super busy editing, managing, and designing for TSR; we'll squeeze a few articles out of him, but not lots. You (yeah, YOU) can write things and send them in, can't you? We'll always give contributions from members serious consideration for publication. Send for the legal paperwork, and then send the work in with it. Typewritten is a must, double-spaced helps muchly, and using our style saves us work. So how about it?

Sat down to write Notes From HQ last time and that story just sort of rolled out by itself. I wish they all came that easy.

I ran the AD&D Open and RPGA tournaments at the GEN CON® South convention in early February, and we had lots of good games. The Open drew 273, in 7-man teams, and the RPGA event had 35 players in groups of 5. Just a couple of years ago, this con was tiny, attracting 250 or less; this year topped 500, and came off smoothly in the new building. It's already good, and next year it's going to start getting Big; check it out. The scenarios used this year will be available by this fall, as RPGA AD&D modules R-5 and R-6.

Would you like news about TSR? They've always got new games coming out, new developments (like acquiring a company that makes Needleworks), and have interesting plans — like the D&D Radio show in the works *(RPGA strikes again; you heard it here first!)* or the D&D movie, which seems to be getting under way once again. If you'd like a column with TSR news, let me know.

Well, enough rambling for now. Talk at you later...

Adam Niejna, Grenadier's Ray Rubin, and HOBBY WORLD's Doug McNelly show off their gold.

Grenadier

Wizard's Gold Giveaway

This begins a regular series of articles reprinted or excerpted from GRENADIER MODELS' Newsletter. Grenadier make the only Official AD&D Figures, and they usually have better ones at better prices than anyone else. CHECK IT OUT!

If you'd like to receive "The Grenadier Bulletin," write them and tell them so: Price & Pine Sts., Holmes Industrial Center, Holmes, PA 19043.

The 1980-81 "Wizard's Gold Giveaway" by Grenadier came to a close last October, when Executive Vice President Ray Rubin gave away ***one ounce of gold***, half to 14-year old Adam Niejna of Florida, and half to store owner Doug McNelly of HOBBY WORLD, Miami.

The contest simply involved sending in a coupon found in a box of ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS figures — with one gold-plated figure hiding inside. Another contest is running *right now*; if you find a gold figure in your new box of Grenadier figures, send it in quick! ONE THOUSAND gold-plated Orc Shamans are out there somewhere, and one lucky winner's name will be drawn at the GEN CON® convention in August. The name of the store where the figures were purchased is important, as the one-ounce prize is split between the buyer and the store owner.

RPGA INTERVIEW with. . .

"JAKE" JAQUET

Gary Lee Jaquet (pronounced "Zhakwet") is a tall, slender, serious gentleman with curly hair and a large moustache. He projects a subtle air of authority perched on the verge of digression. Generally knowledgeable (though dry) in both verbal and physical style, there's something underneath almost tugging at an invisible leash, as if about to go bounding off for some purpose.

The nickname "Jake" comes from grade school days, when it was helpful in sorting out the Garys. When Jake joined TSR he was a quiet staff member slogging along in Dragon Publishing, almost unnoticed until the sudden departure of former editor Tim Cask. He was quickly thrust into prominence as Editor of DRAGON™ magazine, and is now its Publisher. He's predictably hard to find and talk to these days.

But if you can find Gary Gygax you can find Jake Jaquet, and so (being as insistent as we are) find him we did. Now, after trimming out the trade secrets, side comments, and excess verbage, Part One of our three-part detailed and revealing exploration into the recent history of Dragon Publishing and Gary Lee Jaquet is now ready for your eyes.

HQ: When did you start with TSR?

JJ: My starting date with TSR was officially May 1st, 1979. I assume the next question is "Why?," or "How did you start here?"

HQ: Yup.

JJ: When I was in college, and got introduced to the D&D® game...

HQ: By?

JJ: Okay, an interesting story. A short one, but interesting.

I was in a pinball arcade one day in 1974, and went up to the counter to get some quarters. There was a gentleman behind the counter who would pass out the money, and sell hot dogs and whatnot, who was working with graph paper and colored pencils and some strangely shaped dice. I asked what was going on, and he explained that he was working on an aspect of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game. And he was creating, at that moment, the dungeon for an adventure that he was planning on running that weekend.

We discussed it a little bit, and it looked quite intriguing, so he asked if I'd like to come along to the next meeting of the game club and see how it was played. As it happened, after we got our introductions out of the way, that was Tim Kask. We went to the game club that Saturday, and I saw the game and actually played in it myself; was hooked immediately. This is back when the D&D rulebooks were hard to find. We had a bookstore that ordered them specially for us, so I immediately ordered a set, and the dice, and as soon as they came in I was hot on creating dungeons myself.

At any rate, Tim graduated in 1975, and went on to TSR to become one of the first employees. I graduated in '76 with a degree in Journalism, and found out that there were a lot of other people with degrees in Journalism all looking for jobs; the market was not particularly lucrative at that time. And so I took a job just working construction, which was originally a temporary endeavor, say for a few weeks, until I found work with a newspaper or whatever. As I decided that newspapers weren't my cup of tea, the job of working construction (building new homes, as it happens) stretched out a little longer than I anticipated. Namely, about three years!

During that time I was coming up to Lake Geneva to visit TSR and Tim in particular; he's a good friend. We'd get together and play games, and I knew most of the TSR people. As Tim started to get overloaded with work, I'd take a boxfull of manuscripts with me and edit them at home, and drop them off a couple of weekends later and pick up a new batch. I was sort of working freelance, or whatever you want to call it, for TSR prior to actually coming here to work full time.

I originally applied for a position as designer back when TSR first started to hire its design staff. You had to turn in the answers to a very lengthy questionnaire that Gary had drawn up, and design a new monster, a new magic spell, and a new trick and trap. I turned all this stuff in, and eventually someone else got the job (I forget who, now) but at the same time it was decided that the publications end of the company was going along well enough that Tim needed an assistant, which was more what I wanted to do *anyway*. So I started here as Assistant Editor of DRAGON™ magazine.

HQ: And then you became Editor in early 1980. How?

JJ: Well, about that time we started to add other people to the staff, which is where Kim Mohan became involved. And about that time, as it happened, Tim resigned. The magazine was already under my jurisdiction, and this put the responsibility of the entire operation on my shoulders.

HQ: When did you become Publisher?

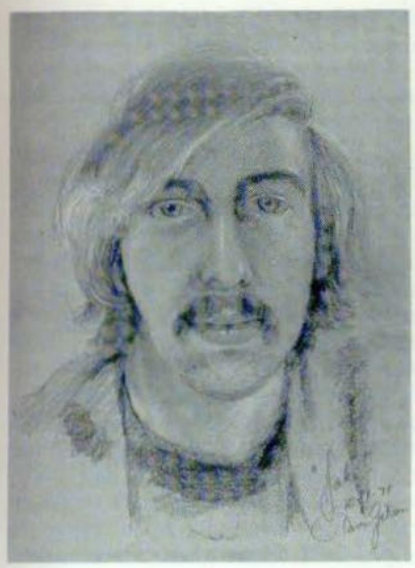
JJ: I became Publisher in April of 1981. It was decided that the Publisher should have the responsibility, both legally and ethically, for the content of the magazine, but not necessarily have anything to do with it. Kim Mohan, as Editor, is now specifically responsible for the inception and creation of DRAGON magazine.

HQ: Do you know why Tim left?

JJ: I could hazard conjecture, but I think that question should best be addressed to Tim. As do all journalists, Tim had and has something in his blood that wants him to continue to break new ground, new ventures and so forth. For both personal and professional reasons he felt that he could not do that in the position he had with the company, and therefore chose to leave. He's the Editor and Publisher of a new magazine called Adventure Gaming, in which he is fairly free to create a magazine which is personally his.

HQ: DRAGON magazine has grown quite a bit lately. Generally, the quality has improved, notably since you've become involved. Is this due to a particular goal on your part, or a philosophy?

JJ: I'd like to say that I was entirely responsible, but unfortunately such is NOT the case. DRAGON magazine *was* growing slowly, but then, so was the D&D game when I started with the company. Certainly there were some things that I did differently from Tim, simply



because we have different philosophies on magazine production and publications in general. But D&D popularity was growing at an extremely rapid pace at that time, which it hadn't been earlier, so I can't really say that it was something that I did that made the magazine as popular and successful as it has been.

The D&D game has grown phenomenally over the last 2 years, as has DRAGON™ magazine. Now, that isn't the only thing that's caused it, otherwise competing magazines covering the same subject would have sprung up, which they haven't until lately. We were actively seeking the highest circulation we could get, because we're in business to make money, and you have to have a large circulation to make any amount of it. A high circulation also allows us to do a lot more things for the reader than we could afford to do as a small magazine.

Throughout 1980, we spared no expense in putting out the best possible magazine. In early 1980 we had a circulation of about 10,000 magazines a month, and now we have over 70,000. TSR is finally starting to see some benefit from the magazine having grown, because until this time we've been pouring every cent back into the magazine itself.

HQ: Like Hildebrandt and Boris covers, and things like that?

JJ: Exactly. The modules and play aids in the center are all relatively expensive to produce, but it's our philosophy that the readers will buy it if we give them something for their bucks, and in turn we will eventually benefit. So now everyone's happy. The readers are getting a very good value for their money, so I think everyone wins.

HQ: It seems that way. But while the average age of a typical role playing gamer is dropping (approaching the lower teens), DRAGON magazine seems to be aimed at the upper teens or even higher. Do you have any comment on this?

JJ: Well, the magazine is a little bit different than the games themselves. While the age of the average D&D player may be dropping as more and more new young people are introduced to the game, the magazine is designed for people who have been D&D players for some period of time, and who are interested in pursuing it further. The readers are usually somewhat older people with an "intellectual penchant" towards the game.

Let me go off on a tangent here for a minute. The D&D game can be played at two levels, just as chess can. You can buy a chess set, read the rules, and play chess at that level, or you can pick up all the Bobby Fischer books and learn about the opening, middle, and end games, and play chess at that entirely different level for the rest of your life, and be very happy with it. It's all what you choose to do. D&D play can be the same way. You can play by the rules without expanding the game, but if you want to look for a broader horizon, then you need the intellectual discourse, a form of discussion, which is where DRAGON magazine comes in.

The magazine can be read and enjoyed by anyone, but it's also that discussion, so the person reading it can pursue the D&D game in particular, and fantasy role playing gaming in general, at a little higher level. The readers are looking at the refinements: what other people have to say, how to handle unique situations, or something that may be less than satisfactory. Generally, a person at that level of D&D play is either older, and consequently more intellectually advanced in terms of study, or a preceptive and/or precocious younger person.

HQ: More mature, then?

JJ: Yeah, in some ways, I don't want to say mature, because that doesn't imply exactly what I want to say. For example, to the younger person, a tesseract is just a door that opens, and you come out somewhere else; it just acts weird. If you want to discuss this on a higher intellectual plane — why a tesseract functions in the fashion that it does — then that requires someone with more intellectual experience, a math or physics background and the ability to visualize in an abstract way, which perhaps the younger person doesn't have yet. Which isn't to say that there's any difference in the intelligence or anything; just, y'know, maturity would be the word if it were applied to intelligence or education. So I think that's one of the reasons why the readership has an older mean age than the game players themselves.

HQ: Do you consciously target towards the higher level of intellectual maturity?

JJ: No; we don't "write down" to readers, but we're very conscious of the fact that we do have a sizeable number of younger readers, like for example a junior high school student who doesn't have 24 bucks to pay for a subscription to the magazine, but knows that he'll enjoy it and it'll help his D&D play. So he gets his folks to give it to him for a present, and they provide the money. Well, that's a sizeable amount, and they're going to be looking over this person's shoulder to see what's been bought. We want to provide high quality, in terms of value for the money, and we also know that they're going to be looking at it with the *parents'-eye* view.

We're going to portray the game as intellectually as possible, and not get into graphic violence or naked bodies as perhaps some other publications would. Not "art for the sake of art." We don't want to have an individual aspect of the magazine taken out of context by a parent, and have the whole thing taken out of context from that one piece.

HQ: Let's back up a bit in time. What was your part in making the GAMMA WORLD™ game?

JJ: The game first started off as a concept from a series of notes that Tim Kask had, compiled by someone within the company; it was an anonymous piece of material. He asked me to look at it from an editor's standpoint, in terms of what it would take to get this into publishable shape. After looking at it for a little while using my professional skills and evaluations, I said "Hey, this won't be an editing job, this will be a rewrite at the *least*, and probably just throwing it all out and starting over will be the best way."

So that was how the GAMMA WORLD game started off. At that time it was called Mutant, by the way; the working title, as it were. The concept was given over to Jim Ward for his evaluation of what it could be turned into, as a role playing game. Jim worked on it for a while, and then I received some more material from Tim, my connection with the company.

I'll backtrack a bit here and say that originally Tim, as an editor for TSR Hobbies in early '76, was very busy and prevailed upon *me* because at that time I was doing some "contract for labor" editing work for him. When he first came up here he had all sorts of responsibilities with the company: everything from sweeping the floors to editing the Strategic Review to working on the D&D supplements, as did all the people in the company at that time. And more came on Tim's shoulders: editing several yearly pieces of work: Eldritch Wizardry, Blackmoor, Greyhawk, and so forth in the D&D line; Classic Warfare, and a few others. When this project was sort of dumped on him, he in turn dumped it off to me, and eventually to Jim to work on. Sometimes Tim kicks himself now, because it was a nice opportunity to become a game designer by credit, and it fell on myself and Jim.

At any rate, the initial batch of notes actually evolved out of nothing. Portions of the manuscript were turned back over to me, and I was working on some of the game mechanics, the wording of the written text, and so forth. Jim, at the time, was working a lot on the creatures and the Cryptic Alliances and the organizations that would exist within the GAMMA WORLD setting. At that time, also, I wrote up the initial premise, or justification, for the scenario existing: that introduction that appears on the first page of the rules. That was probably my biggest piece of creative writing.

After that the majority of the text was created by Jim, drawing upon the METAMORPHOSIS ALPHA scenario. You'll notice a lot of similarities between — well, for example, the mutated creatures. Most of the mutations that you find in MA you find in the GAMMA WORLD game; indeed, how many different mutations can there be, by definition? Taller and smaller and so forth. But Jim did a lot of that work, and then it turned to me. With Jim having done a lot of the mechanical work with it, I also threw in some of my own thoughts on game mechanics at that point — some of the combat systems, that were worked on even further after I got done.

I should add here that although Jim and I were the primary persons involved with this, other people with TSR at the time worked on it, and indeed, the finished product was different from what Jim and I had seen as the final manuscript.

So that was my involvement with the GAMMA WORLD game. Jim and I were given equal credit, and the number of hours we spent on the project was roughly equal. He was much more the mechanicist, putting the elements in, and my role was more of wordsmith, in conveying those elements so a reader would make it all come together. It seemed to work out very well for us.

It was a rather odd project, too; I don't recall, now, if I had met Jim before the game came out or not. We worked through the mail, by telephone, and so forth, and it was an entirely non-face-to-face project, which may have been unique.

HQ: This original manuscript just sort of arose? Jim gave reference to one or two science fiction classics, of course, like "Mutie', "Orphans in the Sky", and so forth; but from what you said, it seems that the ideas just sort of appeared. Was this in the course of a group effort of the TSR staff, just an interest in the subject, or what?

JJ: Well, source material for anything — someone says "Now, where did the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game come from?" — y'know, you can cite any reference you like back to the mythology of early man, which the tales came from originally. The same holds true to a degree with the GAMMA WORLD game; it came directly from MA, and definitely drew upon the D&D game. It also drew upon a number of pieces of literature, all revolving around the "after the cataclysm" scenario, where "A Canticle for Leibowitz" or "Armageddon 2525" or whatever.

The GAMMA WORLD system could conceivably be expanded, and you could use a lot of the same things to create a whole universe. However, it was designed to be a closed universe, just this one small world. *Where* the original concept for having game based on a "role playing science fiction in the post-cataclysm future" scenario came from, I can't say. It may have had a "committee birth", if you will.

HQ: Interesting. You rewrote or edited this manuscript, adding your own ideas for rules. Where did you get your ideas for game mechanics, and what made you think that you had the ability to do this sort of thing?

JJ: I was a gamer in college, which is where my gaming experience lies; role-playing games in particular, simulation games in general. My gaming experience prior to college had been limited to some board games that I found interesting — Risk, for example, and some of the obvious classics like Scrabble and Monopoly and so forth that everyone plays.

When I got into college, my first exposure to simulation gaming was in 1969, as a freshman. I saw these people playing this strange game with a hexagon map grid and little paper counters. As it turned out, it was Gettysburg, which is one of the introductory games that most old-time gamers played first. And I was really fascinated by it. Waterloo was another one that I saw played, and I was just flabbergasted by the concept of simulating entire armies at this scale. So that was exposure; after that, I went out and bought something ridi culous (something really complex)

and then had the problem of trying to find someone to play it with! You go to a friend and say, "Take these rules" — boomph, throw them on the desk — "and try it." Anyway, when I got to SIU there was a game club, and that was where I was introduced to the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game.

Being a theorist by nature, I like to examine why the rules are written the way they are, or "Why Richtoffen's War is different from Red Baron" or whatever. A system of mechanics, by its very nature, is something you can pick apart. You can examine it almost like a scientist will pick apart a chemical compound. I found that to be an interesting mental exercise: "Why was this game designed this way, and what could I do to make it better?"

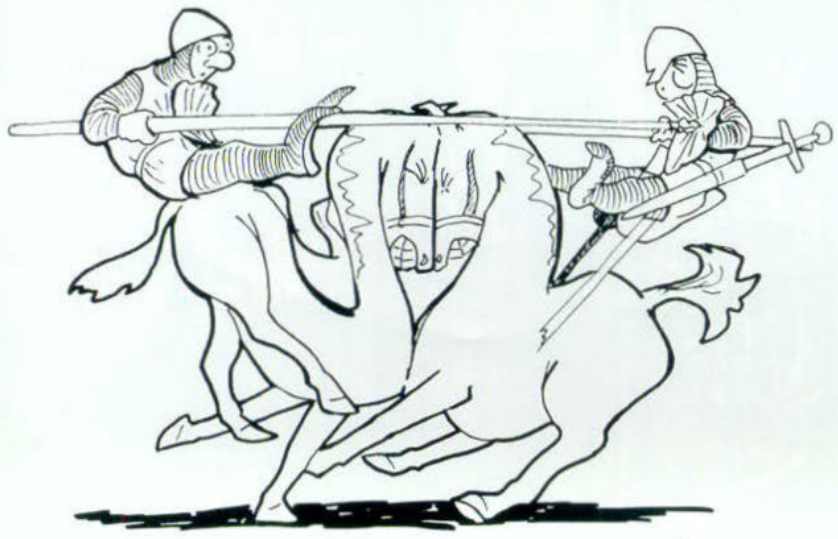
You start experimenting with concepts. Maybe they're workable, maybe they're not, but at least it starts you thinking in that direction. Or you come across an ambiguity in rules, and you have to make a determination: "Well, does it really mean this, or does it mean this?" Using Risk as an example, you can interpret "the third set of cards" as meaning the third time *everyone* has turned in a set of cards, or just "the third set of cards to be turned in." You have to get a group consensus.

That's a part of game design wordsmithing, where you make that presentation to the reader clear enough that there is no possible misunderstanding or misinterpretation. So that was where I got into theory of game design — at that basic level, which wasn't a practicing level. When you got into the original DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game in '74, you became a game designer almost by necessity, because there weren't rules there. They were suggestions on what you could do as your own game designer.

This relates to the GAMMA WORLD game. Having experienced this basic game design from interpreting ambiguities in rules, having played the D&D system from its beginnings and both seeing how it evolved (which was almost a step-by-step course in game design) plus the "hands-on" training in terms of what the game required of me as a DM and as a player, I got a good background in how a game could be designed. The D&D system was a very logical and workable (if not somewhat arbitrary) system for applying mechanics to a game of role playing, so there *are* six prime characteristics for GAMMA WORLD characters, determined by 3 six-sided dice, and so forth. Obviously you could refine that: have percentile dice, characteristics that go from zero to a hundred, and then a little more... but the original and additional concepts of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game were a good starting point, and we just built upon them.

A lot of the GAMMA WORLD systems are rather basic. They're sound in terms of design, and obviously players feel so too, because it still continues to be a very good seller and people play it a lot. But they are really basic and rather arbitrary. Now if you want to get into that old "realism versus playability" argument, they're very playable. They're not necessarily a simulation of realism; y'know, poison hits you and it's all or nothing. Maybe that's not quite realistic, but it *does* work, and if you're going to be so arbitrary as to say that 18 represents a maximum strength, fine, that's OK too.

There *are* original ideas in the GAMMA WORLD game, in terms of mechanical things, and all very logical. Game design is more of a science than an art if you're starting with something that exists; more refinement, and more 'how can we make this game more playable?" Whereas, when the D&D game first came out, though it was evolutionary it was much more the "art" of game design.



HQ: If you could change part of the GAMMA WORLD game, would you, and what?

JJ: Uh, yeah; if I were going back to do it all over again...*(pauses)* I would tinker with the mechanics, specifically. There are some things that, while playable, are unnecessary or a little too cumbersome. For example, there's the whole Route Movement/Search Movement time thing: varying time scales for varying geographical distance scales to accomodate both traveling across continents and exploring buidings. I would throw that all out and do it over again.

HQ: Would you recommend that a typical GAMMA WORLD player or game master thinker with it like that?

JJ: I assume that they already have. From what I've seen, most people stay on one level or the other. They don't say, "Well, we're going to go out and take a 20 mile hike first of all, and have an outdoor adventure that winds up in a city, and then explore some ruins, and use another scale." I would make that clearer. I'd also put a little more emphasis on Artifacts other than what's listed. There's a rationale for having the weaponry and so forth that exists as Artifacts, but I'd put in more things.

The Mech Alliance and the robot farms could be elaborated upon. I mean, how did that society have its food? What about ocean farms? What did the people do for recreation? Would you come across a sports complex that looks like one day, or would it be something entirely different? There wasn't enough emphasis on the sociological aspects, and what would be left behind. There's much more the military conflict stuff. Indeed, at that time, back about '76, games were really designed with that in mind: *CONFLICT. Now,* role playing games, especially, are much more involved with the ongoing worlds that are created, and you *have* to have that detail.

I would probably argue with Jim a bit on this, but I would go through and change the names of a lot of the creatures. Just arbitrarily coming up with weird names seems a little silly to me, reading through it now. The same goes for some of the Cryptic Alliances. And I'd tinker some with the mutations; one that allows a touch to turn any object into foam rubber, or something, is a little out of left field. You can have a mutation do anything as long as you know what, but I think it detracts a little bit. So the changes and additions I would make would be minor; the basic framework would remain the same.

HQ: The overall flavor of the game, though, is definitely science fantasy, as opposed to science fiction. To fill the gap, TSR is going to be coming out with its STAR FRONTIERS™ science *FICTION* game. Wouldn't some of these

changes make it more science *fiction*, and less fantasy?

JJ: Possibly, but I think it leans a little too much to the fantasy side right now. If we look at the D&D and/or AD&D® games as the far end of the *fantasy* spectrum, say the letter "Z," and the STAR FRONTIERS game as the end of the science *fiction* spectrum, say the letter "A," then the GAMMA WORLD game is somewhere around "Q," and I'd like to move it a little more to that middle "M" and "N" range. It can be a good stepping stone from one to the other. I see that as the ideal way for the GAMMA WORLD game to be used in the line of TSR games.

HQ: The METAMORPHOSIS ALPHA game is slated for redesign as the "Metamorphosis Alpha to Omega" supplement to the GAMMA WORLD system. Why go this route, instead of combining them, wrapping it all up in a big package, and calling it the Advanced GAMMA WORLD game?

JJ: The GAMMA WORLD system is on a different level of sophistication than the D&D game systems. Instead of coming out with a complex package, it's much easier to assimilate the GAMMA WORLD game as an overall game setup, with the METAMORPHOSIS ALPHA package as a scenario. If the two are coordinated so that the transfer is easy, the starship Warden becomes a mini-adventure, taking off from the GAMMA WORLD base.

It could be another scenario; MA would be a complex GAMMA WORLD module. Perhaps there could be another "GAMMA WORLD Expansion Module" at some point; all of those could then be combined into an Advanced GAMMA WORLD package. But there are only 64 pages to the GAMMA WORLD system, and that's everything you need to know. You can go directly into MA with only a description of the encounters and the maps, without anything new being added.

HQ: If there's this kind of following there for the GAMMA WORLD system, don't you think there would be a good response to an Advanced GAMMA WORLD package, with specific rules on how to do all these things that are left to whatever you can dream up?

JJ: It's quite possible, but the GAMMA WORLD game is not the ongoing complex system that a D&D world can be. People play it as a science fantasy game — a bridge between two extremes — and not necessarily as a long ongoing campaign. The GAMMA WORLD game is more like a series of adventures all taking place in the same area, the radioactive earth. There's not much to be gained in extended campaign play. Surely one could, if the interest level was there, but once you found out everything about the world, you'd have it all.

HQ: It has been noted, in these troubled times, that the post-holocaust topic could cause unease. Do you have any comment on this aspect?

JJ: There is certainly the potential for holocaust in our societal structure, but I don't see it as likely, not in terms of a military conflict, and I personally am not uneasy with the subject matter of the game. What *is* scary is the GW starting scenario. As technology advances, a society evolves where leisure time allows people to impress their views on others. They have nothing else to do but come up with views and try to spread them.

I can certainly see this happening in our present-day society, and changing from the thirties and forties, when a man had to spend the majority of his time providing for himself and/or his family. Nowadays we're going toward shorter work weeks and more leisure time. What's being done to fill up that lack of a *need* to just survive?

I see this as the potential for the GAMMA WORLD scenario. People are polarizing to their political and sociological beliefs, not having to worry about going out and working; eventually that can be carried to the GAMMA WORLD extreme. So I see that as a much more likely possibility for a holocaust than the military confrontation we live with on a daily basis.

Well, we don't always ask easy questions. Now we're going to put Jake on hold; next issue, watch for his comments on "house organs," honesty and quality, the founding of the RPGA network, and more opinions on TSR from the inside!

WHITE RABBITS

Oops. It has come to our attention that the credits for most of the art and articles of previous newsletters has not been given; some members would like to know who did what. Here's a listing for the first three newsletters, and we'll be more careful in the future.

#1: Cover "The Centaur," by Darlene (Pekul)
Pg. 3: Combat, unsigned Mephit, by Russ Nicholson
Pg. 3: Roman warrior, by Bell
Pg. 4-5: Photos courtesy of TSR Hobbies, Inc.
Pg. 6: Castle, by Erol Otus
Pg. 7: Aarakocra attack, by Russ Nicholson
Elf, by Bell
Pg. 8: Shootout, by Darlene
Pg. 11: Biplane, by Darlene
Pg. 13: Awards photo by Vicki Shanholtzer
Figure photo by David Conant
Pg. 14: Robot, by David S. LaForce
Pg. 15: Combat, by Laura Roslof
Pg. 16: Rocksnoz, by Tom Wham

#2: Cover "The Price" by Steven D. Sullivan
Pg. 3: Woodland attack, by Bill Willingham
Fighter with sword, by Darlene
Pg. 4: Photo courtesy of TSR Hobbies, Inc.
Pg. 5: Sahuagin, by Erol Otus
Pg. 7: Aerial fight, by Steven D. Sullivan
Pg. 8: Trampled, by Bill Willingham
Pg. 10: Hagertral, by Steven D. Sullivan
Pg. 12: Moonrise, by Jim Roslof
Rocksnoz, by Tom Wham

#3: Cover "Survival," by Erol Otus
Pg. 3: Khris, by Darlene
Pg. 4: Adventurers, by Darlene
Pg. 5: Bone Devil, by Jeff Dee
Red Dragon, by Bell
Pg. 6-7: Photos courtesy of Jim Ward
Pg. 8: Mountain, by Jim Roslof
Pg. 9: Photo by Vicki Shanholtzer
Ghoul, by Darlene
Pg. 10: Plant creature, by Jean Wells
Mutant, by Steven D. Sullivan
Pg. 11: Gruumsh, by David S. LaForce
Pg. 12: Creatures, by Bill Willingham
Pg. 13-15: FITS article by Mike Carr
Pg. 13-14: Biplane illustrations, by Darlene
Pg. 18: Wizard and Sword by Darlene
Bar scene, by Steven D. Sullivan
Pg. 19: Paints & brushes, by Laura Roslof
Adventurers, by David S. LaForce
Pg. 20: Frog Prince, by Rev. J. F. Mentzer II
Pg. 21: Hydra battle, by Bell
Pg. 21: Translation table by Bill Hoyer
Pg. 22: Confrontation, by Dave Trampier
Pg. 23: Photo by Vicki Shanholtzer
Werewolf, by Bill Willingham
Pg. 24: Illusionist, by Bill Willingham
Cleanup, by Bell
Pg. 25: Lurking spy, by Steven D. Sullivan
Combat Squad, by Erol Otus
Pg. 26: Escape, by Erol Otus
Pg. 28: GW Village and Mounted Rider by Erol Otus
Pg. 29: Stone Golem, by Steven D. Sullivan
Pg. 31: Kobold fight, by Bill Willingham

Production: TSR's Pre-Press Services Department (Supervisor: Patrick L. Price; typesetting: Dianne J. Burk, Nancy Kerkstra; Keylining: Laura Roslof; Camera: Dawn Pekul). Design, editing, proofreading, layouts, and all uncredited written materials are by Frank Mentzer. Miscellaneous assistance from Bill Hoyer, Mary Altergott, and Tom Robertson (RPGA staff).

TURNBULL TALKING

Reprinted from the D&D PA News #6; courtesy of the Cambridge Evening News, London, England

I hope this won't develop into a turgid "I Remember When" column, but... well, I remember when the original D&D® game arrived in the UK and those lucky enough to know about it started to gain their first experience points. Some of those characters are, I suspect, still alive today, though have probably been mutated to AD&D™ characters mysteriously en route (note: such mutation is *not* an official part of the rules!!). But it may not be apparent to all readers that classes other than Fighter, Magic-User and Cleric simply were not around in those days — those of you having fun running an Illusionist, a Ranger, or a Bard might like to ponder a "world" which didn't admit to the existence of your character at all.

The Advanced game now has quite a number of character classes — indeed there are those of you who want to see more classes given official status, so I believe. I should be very interested to know what classes you would like to see being given official blessing, so next time you write to PAN or order items from the lovely (and quickly becoming a cult figure) Karen, perhaps you would add a couple of lines to tell me.

My own particular favorite is the Illusionist. I can't work up the sickly piety required of Paladinhood; my Thieves always seem to get caught with a hand in someone else's property; I am not psychologically (if not physically) slim and lithe enough to run a Monk well. At least I haven't suffered the indignity of having my Thief stolen, as has a good friend of mine (Bill — a fiver to keep your name out of these pages??).

I have, however, run a prospective Bard. Neddie of Wales —curly hair, sibilant voice, a facility for writing slightly vulgar epic poems about the party's exploits and a propensity for playing (very badly and to the profound irritation of others) any form of musical instrument he could lay his hands on. Then — the tragedy. An encounter with a nasty monster (a special in Dave Tant's dungeon) resulted in his intelligence being reduced, and Bard status was no longer within his grasp. He still preserves his aesthetic appearance, still writes rude rhymes (though few can be persuaded to listen) and moodily toots a large horn which he carries around (and is no substitute for a two-handed sword). So much for my Bard.

But the Illusionist is a real challenge and I'm glad to say mine is still alive at 8th level. He has little in the way of powerful artillery — no Illusionist has —and the use of his spells is a much more subtle and tricky matter if they are to be effective. I have had great fun, however, with such beauties as spectral force and minor creation. Even the low-level illusions can, given favourable conditions and (of course) luck, be very effective against tough opposition.

Though there are those who dislike the addition of new character classes, I have to say I'm not one of them. They can give an interesting and novel perspective to the game and provide an even greater challenge for the inventive player.

Your opinions?

SPELLING BEE

Evocations! In the AD&D® game, they usually mean trouble for the bad guys; *fireball... lightning bolt...* the sure-hit *magic missile...* and many others. These three are the most commonly used, so let's take a closer look at their proper handling.

My wizard Felonius is back with his friend Athelstan, the ranger lord, to handle the spell demonstrations.

Magic Missile: The obvious advantages of this attack are its speed and its accuracy. With its 1 segment casting time, it can often be tossed into a melee before the opponents have a chance to do anything — sometimes even when the caster loses initiative, depending on weapon speed factors, enemy casting times, and so forth. It hits almost any creature, no saving throw; magic resistance always applies.

Felonius likes it because of those reasons, and also because it has no material component; he can zap one off without worrying about a long casting time, and doesn't have to dig anything out of his pouches. It's always ready.

There are few defenses: a *shield* spell, brooch of shielding, spell-eating or -turning devices... on the whole, it's a fast delivery for a moderate amount of damage. Consider: a puny first level magic-user can slay a kobold 210 feet away outside.

There are several ways it is commonly misused. Note that it only hits creatures; Felonius can't blow a lock open with it, or shoot out a torch. The targets *must* all be within a 10 square foot area; this could be an area 5' long and 2' wide. Not much, so it's almost always one creature. And all the missiles go out at once; at the end of the casting time, *all* the damage is delivered to the targets. No delays, no one-missile-per-segment variants, and no misses as long as the target is detectable.

Detectable, you say? Sure... by vision (normal or infra-) OR by magical detection. Obviously Felonius can shoot at an invisible opponent if he's got a *detect invisibility* running, but what if he doesn't? He can't shoot 'em if he can't see 'em. But he can see 'em in a variety of ways — such as *detect magic*, if the invisibility is magical. This detection gives him something to target on, and the missiles will hit. Similarly, if he can see the location precisely without actually seeing the enemy, he can still shoot. For example: Athelstan had that *detect magic* spell up, picked up a magical invisible enemy, and cast a *faerie fire* on it. Felonius could see the outline from the magic, even though he couldn't see the actual creature.

Suppose the enemy peeks around a corner, and Felonius starts casting the *magic missile*. The baddie sees him casting and ducks back out of sight. Felonius' missiles *won't* zip around the corner at him; sorry, but he misses. He couldn't see the target at the instant the spell was completed — the crucial determining factor.

The AD&D combat system is NOT designed for critical hits. You cannot magic missile a creature's eyes, for example; in an abstract sense, you can remove some "hit points" from an opponent with this spell. One word should be added to the familiar phrase, to clarify: "and unerringly hit their target creature," not just any target. The missiles do abstract "hit points" of damage, and the creature as a whole has hit points. This can, on occasion become very important; against a basilisk, for example.

Remember: it's only a first level spell.

Fireball: This is usually an outdoor spell. If cast underground, be sure there's enough volume to absorb it, or you'll get caught in your own blast. It has a nice range, though; at the minimum level for casting, it can be thrown 450 feet (outside), the blast radiating outward (20' radius) from that point.

In open area, the fireball fills a 40' diameter sphere. This translates to about 33,510 cubic feet. During preparations for the 1980 AD&D Open tournament, I came up with a quick method for the DMs to visualize the area affected: consider one 10' cube, containing 1000 cubic feet of space (10x10x10). A fireball will fill approximately 33 1/2 such cubes. The DM must remember to expand the blast equally in all directions from the point of the explosion, but the area can be quickly calculated with this method.

In diagram A, the fireball goes off in the middle of a 4-way intersection (the first cube) and expands 8 cubes down each of the four 10' corridors. Note that a 10' long slice of a 20' by 20' corridor contains four of these cubes, as in diagram B. And when the blast reaches open area, it expands in all directions equally, as in diagram C.

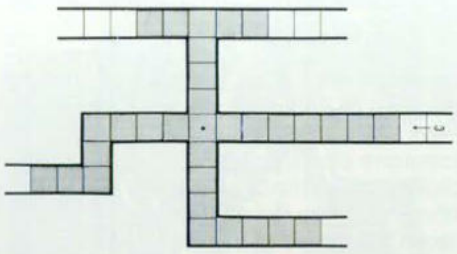


Diagram A

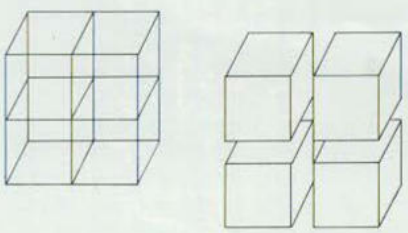


Diagram B

If a victim is at the very edge of the calculated blast area, it is quite acceptable to allow a bonus to the saving throw, and even permissible to allow NO damage if the save is made: "You jump back and the fireball stops just in front of you!" The exact blast area may be calculated, if desired, using the formula for the volume of a sphere, or whatever the situation calls for.

If something blocks Felonius' aim at the instant the spell is completed, "ground zero" occurs at the site of the obstruction. For example, Felonius and friends are 100 yards from the baddies (outdoor) and both sides are tossing long-range spells and missle fire at each other. If Felonius is casting a *fireball* and loses initiative (badly) to the bad guy casting a *wall of ice* (to block incoming spells and missiles), Felonius' fireball will impact on his side of the wall.

Items have their own saving throw chart, but I can't seem to find adequate written references to its proper use. To be more specific, it has always been assumed that if a creature makes his/her/its saving throw, the items carried don't have to save. It's logical; a save indicates that defensive actions have been performed which avoid the worst affects of the spell. But it's not specified. Certainly, if the creature misses the saving throw, all items carried must be saved for. I recommend this procedure, but if you want to be tough about it, you may have items save regardless of the saving throw of the carrier. Remember to adjust for situations and preparations, though.

Fireballs are noisy. All creatures in the area will be alerted to the presence of danger, and the noise itself might dislodge old timbers or rocks underground, and maybe even cause a whole aged ruin to collapse — possibly burying our heroes under tons of rubble.

Lightning Bolt: This one is safer than a fireball, and will affect more creatures; several nasties are immune to fire, but most are affected by lightning. It doesn't

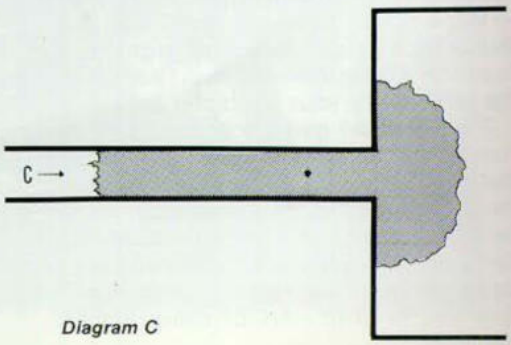


Diagram C

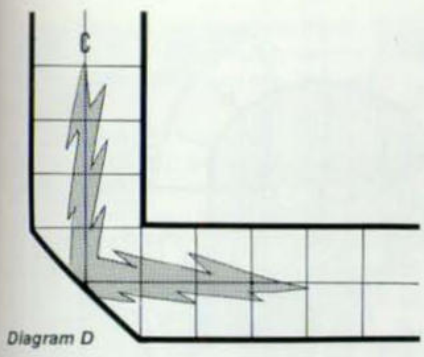


Diagram D

have the range of a fireball, but you don't need the range as much; the area is variable, too. Felonius can select a forked bolt for a 10' by 40' area, or a single 5' by 80' bolt. He *can't* have the forks go in different directions; that's just a descriptive term to explain the wider area of effect. Back when he was 5th level, his bolt could start up to 90 yards off, and could go 40' (or 80') from that point. These days, of course, he's got a lot more range... it can start up to 200 yards away (outside) at 18th level, or (of course) right off of his fingertips if he wishes.

Rebounds are possible. The bolt will rip through wooden doors, creatures, and up to 1' of stone, but it will ricochet off of thicker stone, metal doors, and other immobile objects. In this case, the bolt acts like light when reflecting; as in diagram D, it may be bounced off of a slanted wall to hurtle down an unseen corridor. But it rebounds straight back off of a flat facing wall, and can be tricky in tight spaces, as in diagram E.

If the bolt should happen to contact a creature more than once, due to rebounding, it does *NOT* do any more damage than what the caster rolls; more damage makes the bolt too powerful. The victim must save for each contact, however, and if any of the saving throws are missed, full damage is incurred. There would logically be less of a chance for the creature to save in this case; remember that the entire bolt moves at the speed of light, much too fast for the situation to change while it's flying.

Lightning bolts are as noisy as fireballs, with similar hazards as those described under *fireball*.

If you have any questions about these spells, or arguments with my deductions, please write to "Spelling Bee," care of this newsletter. Have any other spells you would like to see discussed? Let us know.

Next issue, I'll go over the spells that *aren't* in the books: the 9th level magic-user spells *Crystalbrittle* and *Energy Drain* (from the "G" series of modules) and Len Lakofka's new clerical spells in DRAGON™ magazine #58 (February 1982).

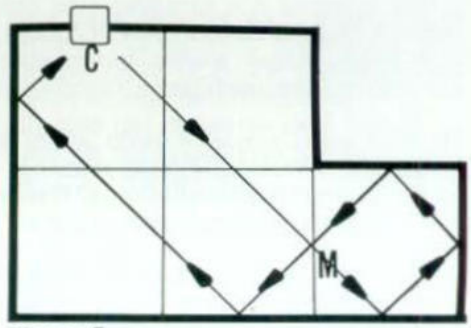


Diagram E

Notes For the Dungeon Master

Last issue we promised to give you some tips and techniques for being a better Dungeon Master, along with a few tricks or traps. Let's start with preparing for play.

There are a whole variety of things I do to prepare for running an AD&D® game. Once the players are together and have characters ready to go (assuming that you've given them some mission to go on, clues, rumors, or legends to trace, or just the location of a dungeon or other adventure), write down all the details on a sheet from the Dungeon Master's Adventure Log (from TSR) or a piece of paper or a file card. The information to have handy should include the player name, character name, race, class(es), level(s), alignment, Armor Class, hit points, and (if you wish) magic items. Add two dates to the sheet: realtime date of play AND fantasy date. Your world should have a dating and time system of some type, to keep it organized and running like clockwork (so to speak).

To keep track of all the characters, both player and non-player, I have standard 3" by 5" file cards for all of them. I record all characteristic scores plus all the information listed above. On the back is a list of "standard spells" the character would probably take on an average adventure (adjustable for particular circumstances), to speed up setup time (vital for NPCs, optional for player characters). I use different colored cards for each race: plain white for humans, green for elves, orange for dwarves, yellow for gnomes, blue for halflings, and pinkish for half-orcs. All of these colors should be available at some type of local store, often in drugstores and office supply shops.

Keeping the books handy, all I need to run the adventure is the record sheet and my dungeon plan. My dungeons are usually off in the wilderness somewhere, so while the players are getting their characters ready for the trip I roll for wandering encounters, abbreviating details (MV, AC, hp, #AT, D) and adding the saving throw vs. spells (and wands, if the party has any) and the score to hit AC0. From this "THAC0" (To Hit Armor Class 0) you can quickly add or subtract to find the actual roll needed for any given situation. Sometimes I check the % In Lair figure to see if they live nearby, but I've got most of the lairs in my wilderness preset, as to where and how much treasure, so I just check my notes on the area traversed. If I have specific plans for the dungeon encounters and the party will need a magic item or spell that they don't have or didn't bring, I'll often toss that item or scroll into the treasure carried by the wandering creatures.

In future columns, I'll talk about running intricate combats, NPC spell casters, long-term campaign planning, handling problem players and problem characters (often different problems entirely), and details on running game mechanics. If you've got a specific problem or situation you'd like me to explain or offer advice on, let me know; write to me care of RPGA HQ.

Now for a couple of goodies:

1. HO HUM, ANOTHER WIMP: DMs should be unpredictable sometimes. Weak monsters may come equipped with unexpected magic to throw bored players a few curves. For example, a limping kobold approaching the party may have a potion of giant strength and/or bracers, heavy armor, or whatever, to change a common predictable situation into a surprising turnabout. To set the stage, throw in identical normal monsters a few times before slipping in the odd one.

— CS, Rockford, IL

2. MORE SURPRISES: If your dungeon parties are used to mapping lots of uneventful corridors, imagine the excitement when one innocent wall turns out to be illusionary (they don't walk around tapping the walls all the time, do they?), behind which is a lairful of low-level nasties (orcs, hobgoblins, etc.) ready to run out and spend 2-3 surprise segments pounding on the whole party. The attacks come all down one side, not just in front or back.

— RR, Conshohocken, PA

3. THE CHEAP GEM: This one's good for low-level parties. They come across a huge gem in an elaborate setting, anchored firmly in a rock pedestal. No amount of strength will release it. The key is to cast an *enlarge* spell at the *setting;* it pulls free of the rock, releasing the gem. To sort out the "goats from the cucumbers," the setting turns out to be far more valuable than the large quartz "gem"...

— AM, Princeton, NJ

DISPEL CONFUSION

Q: Woe is me; I blew my "chance to know" roll for magic missile. How can my magic-user (human female) get this great spell?
A: It happens to the best of us. If your character can find a scroll of it, and if she knows the *write* spell, she can study and cast it without understanding it fully. Or, you can wait a few years; using the Age Categories (DMG pg. 13), when Intelligence changes due to aging, you can recheck the chance to know. Of course, high-power magic *(wishes*, tomes, etc.) can also change Intelligence. Good luck!

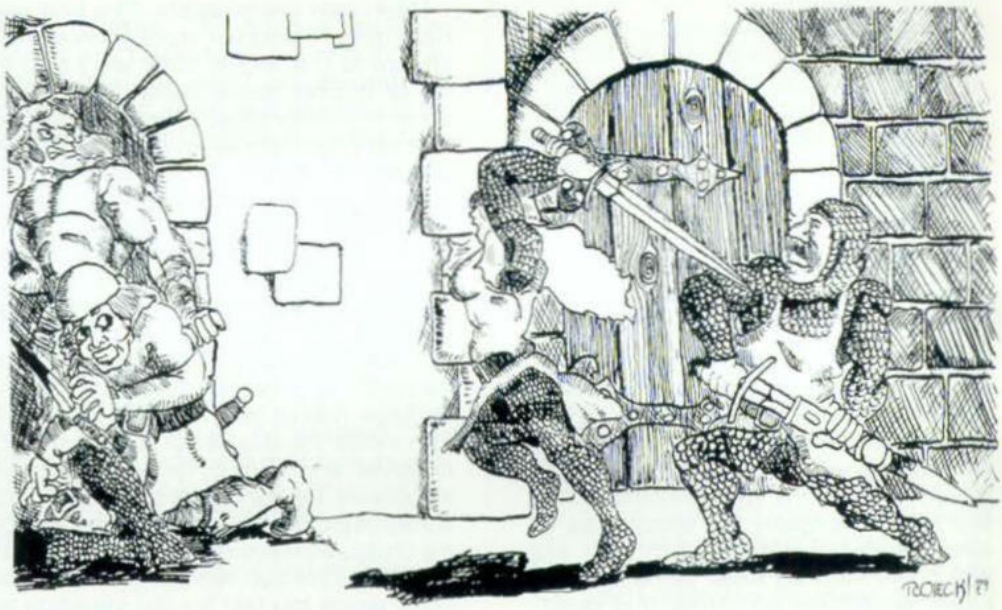
Q: Why won't *dispel illusion* affect a magic-user's Illusion/Phantasm spell effects other than *phantasmal force? Please* don't start talking about "game balance" again!
A: Okay. In game logic, magic-users and illusionists draw magical energies from different sources, or of different types. They can rarely affect each other's magics, with the exceptions as noted. That good enough for you?

Q: Do holy water splashes or holy symbols have any affect on lycanthropes?
A: Sorry. Note that only 2 of the known were-creatures are evil. None of them have direct or implied connections to the Negative Material Plane — that connection being the reasoning behind the effects of holy items.

Q: If a *wall of force* is cast down a corridor, waist-high, at a group of approaching orcs, what will happen? Will they be sliced in half?
A: No. "Wall" spells are designed for specified purposes, included in their descriptions. Some give damages; some do not, and should *NOT* be modified to do so. Specifically, *wall of fire* and *wall of ice* mention damage, but *wall of force* and *wall of stone* do not. Note that *wall of iron* does mention that "it will fall and crush any creature beneath it," but this is (obviously) vague; the DM should apply good sense to any unusual circumstances. One of these days someone will calculate the force involved, and deduct the damage done by a falling wall of iron *(anyone out there feel ambitious?).*

As to the results of the situation given in the question, the orcs will be displaced (no saving throw); either shoved back, or down, or even up, wherever there is room for them. If they can only be moved into solid matter, then the wall will be displaced; in *NO* case will they take any damage from the wall or the displacement process.

Gary commented that the orcs would then probably use the horizontal wall of force as a path, and run up and beat the tar out of the magic-user...



BASICALLY SPEAKING

by Jon Pickens

This is the first in a series of articles for newcomers to hobby fantasy gaming, and DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® games in particular. In the future, I'll discuss the fine art of Dungeon Mastering for the beginner. This month, however, the focus will be on the D&D® BASIC Set.

First, when opening the box the beginning DM will find the Basic rulebook, a set of dice with a crayon, D&D module B2 "The Keep on the Borderlands," and various fliers — color catalog, RPGA information, questionnaire, and so on. If any of these pieces are missing or damaged, send a letter to TSR Consumer Services (POB 756, Lake Geneva, WI 53147). Damaged materials will be replaced if you return them. Make sure your return address is on the *letter* as well as the envelope; the two often get separated in processing.

If everything is in order, look at the dice. There should be six, one of each type: 4-sided, 6-sided, 8-sided, 10-sided, 12-sided, and 20-sided. At this point, don't worry about what they're used for; just make sure that you have six dice, each a different shape. "First edition" D&D sets may have cardboard chits instead of dice, or may have one die numbered from zero to nine twice.

Don't throw or give away the crayon! Rub it against each face of each die, to work the wax into the number. Gently wipe off the excess wax with a paper towel or tissue. Some of the wax (hopefully) will stay in the numbers, making the dice *much* easier to read.

After the dice are all taken care of, read about how to use them on page B4 of the rulebook. Practice rolling them and reading them a few times. Pay close attention to how to read the four-sided dice, and how to roll numbers from 1-100 (a percentile or "d%" roll). If you have a die numbered 0 to 9, you can roll a number from 1-20 by rolling a 6-sided die along with it: if the 6-sided reads 1, 2, or 3, read the other one normally (0 means 10); if the 6-sided reads 4, 5, or 6, add 10 to get a number from 11 to 20.

AFTER you are familiar with the dice, read through the rules — *once*. DON'T concentrate on descriptions of monsters, spells, or magic items; just try to get a general idea of what each section is about. Then turn to the section on starting a character (starting on page B5). Use the example given to "roll up" a few sample characters. Once you have several sets of ability scores, practice changing each set by trading ability points ("Ability Score Adjustments," page B6). Then practice buying equipment for the new characters. And keep these "sample" characters around! You can use them to learn the combat system, and then give them to beginning players to cut down on set-up time, or use them as Non-Player Characters (NPCs) when your game starts.

After you know how to start characters, go to the section on Combat (B24). Read the rules on hand-to-hand combat carefully, and then run a few rounds of it between the sample characters you made. When you are used to the "to hit" and damage rolls, try some variations — combats with two against two, or with a simple monster or two (orcs and skeletons are both good). Next, start the characters some distance apart; 60 feet, to grab a number. Look up the movement rates for a combat round, and work out *where* the characters will meet if both charge, if only one charges, and so forth. Try adding missile fire (bows and arrows), and "fighting retreats." And finally, try a few fights using the *entire* Combat Sequence. Working through the Example of Combat (B28) is good practice

if you roll all the dice yourself. But you should know all about how the Combat Sequence works before trying to run a game.

The next section to look at is "The Encounter" (B23); it explains what happens in a Game Turn, when the players are actively mapping the dungeon you create. Note how fast and how far their characters can go; thinking in terms of 10' squares can make it easy. Think about how much slower they would go by stopping to look for secret doors, peering around corners, spiking doors open or closed, probing for weak floors, loading up treasure, and so on. It's good practice to make a list of the times needed, which can be improved and added to as you get more practice as a DM. One way to learn the Game Turn Sequence is to take a sheet of graph paper and create a small 10 room dungeon. Roll to get some monsters for about half of the rooms, and practice running those sample characters through it. Another good way to learn is to map out the "Sample Dungeon Expedition" (B59) while making all the rolls for both DM and players.

One more helpful trick is to make a DM Reference Sheet. Find all the important die rolls, tables, and sequences, and copy them on a plain sheet of paper. This will make everthing easy to find during the actual game, and you can organize them whichever way you wish. Even the act of writing the information down will make it easier for you to remember the details on surprise, reactions, initiative, wandering monsters, and so on.

These tips should make it a bit easier to understand the rules. Next issue I'll start on how to set up a campaign, for extended play. In the meantime, questions about D&D® BASIC rules will be answered if you send a Self-Addressed, Stamped Envelope ("SASE") to me, care of RPGA HQ. If you have an early edition of the rules, mention it in your letter. Ciao!

NOTES FROM HQ

There were a couple of errors in the last newsletter. First, the deadline given for the TOP SECRET Gadget Contest is not correct at all; the deadline for entries should be AUGUST 1, 1982.

While we're at it, the deadline for the GAMMA WORLD Art Contest should also be August 1. We should be able to announce all the winners at the GEN CON XV CONVENTION RPGA awards ceremony.

Second, Turns 9 and 10 of the play-by-play FITS game were mislaid. Author Mike Carr's checking his notes, and we should have an update in a future newsletter.

Production is getting better. With the aid of TSR's own Pre-Press Department (for typesetting and layouts), we're printing all the modules we've used in tournaments, and all the others used this year. The newsletters are rolling along, and should be on a nice regular bimonthly schedule by the summer.

Memberships are going a bit slowly; we're not advertising yet. A regular column in DRAGON magazine is in the works, along with magazine ads in various places; that should increase our current 2,000 membership (4,000 counting Britain) into the five-figure range by the end of this year. If YOU like RPGA services, tell your friends! Our best advertising is our happy members.

CANADIAN MEMBERS: A money problem has arisen. You must send the payments in US dollars; the exchange rate changes all the time, and it's much easier if you send us our type of money. Those of you who have already paid in Canadian dollars are lucky; we'll absorb the differences to date. But we *must* start billing new Canadian members for the balance if USA money isn't sent.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS: If you move, *PLEASE* let us know! We're getting a few letters back because we don't know where you've gone. If you want your RPGA materials, drop us a line!

CLUBS: Our International Club Directory is going into production. If you are a member of a club and haven't told us, let us know! We'd like to know the names and addresses of all the game clubs in the country; some are applying for Official Club Status, and we're working on that, too. But you have to tell us first!

DRAGON MAGAZINES: If you ordered the magazine through us, saving $4 on the subscription, and haven't received it — let us know. We'll let Dragon Publishing know about the problem. If you let THEM know, they have to check with us, and the solution gets delayed a bit. ***Note*** that there *can* be a six week delay before your issues start arriving, though, due to office processing. For example, if we get your check at the end of April, you'll get the June issue first, because the May issue is already being mailed out by then. *AND*, if there's any problem with your check, it could delay it another month.

DUNGEON MASTERS: Attention all good DMs in the Northeast USA! We need DMs for an Official Tournament in Chester, PA on June 17-21. (1 year Membership Extension for each session run!) Write to HQ for a DM application. DMs for the GEN CON XV CONVENTION RPGA tournament (Wisconsin, Aug. 19-22) also get the same deal. We MUST have an application on file before you can run a game there!

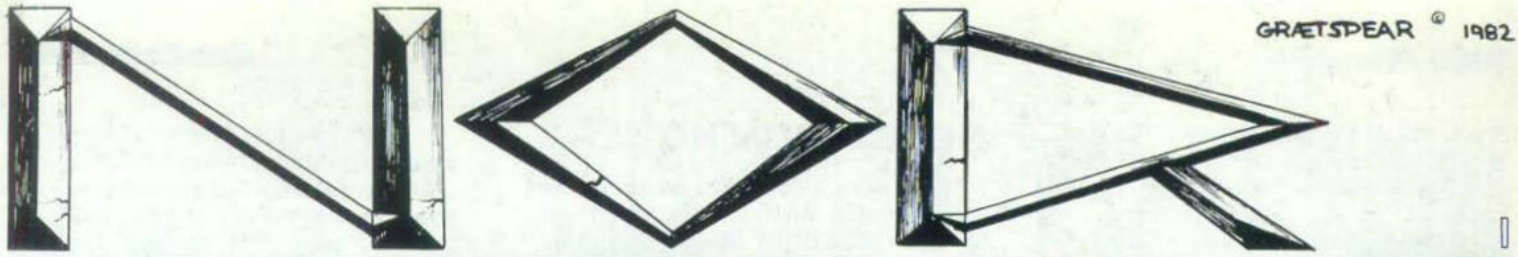
HOT TIP Department: If you're one of the lucky members who bought a pre-publication edition of an RPGA module (R-1, R-2, or R-3 Part I) at the GEN CON XIV convention, hang on to it. We've heard that they're already Collectors' Items drawing high bids, now that the RPGA AD&D module series is in printed form.

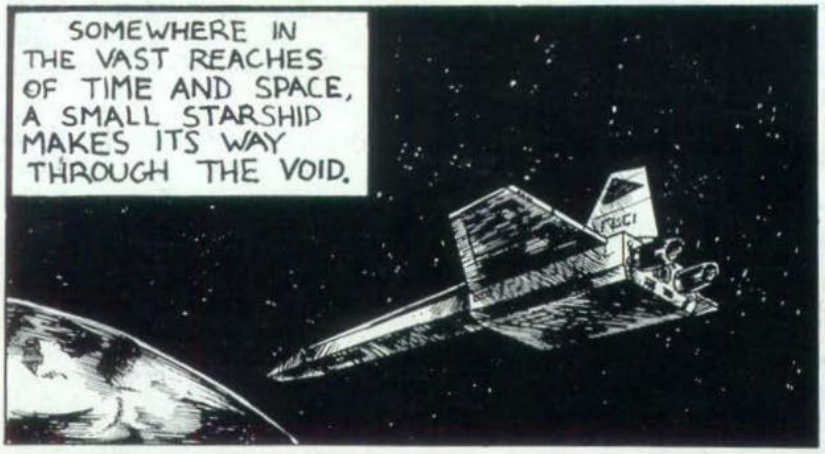
MEMBER AGES: We're trying to get the birth dates and ages of all our members. This information will be kept confidential, and will help us lots in planning events, products, etc. for the most people. We've updated our membership application to include the information, but we'd like to hear from the thousands of existing members most of all. Would you send us a postcard with your name, membership number, age and date of birth? *It'll REALLY HELP!*

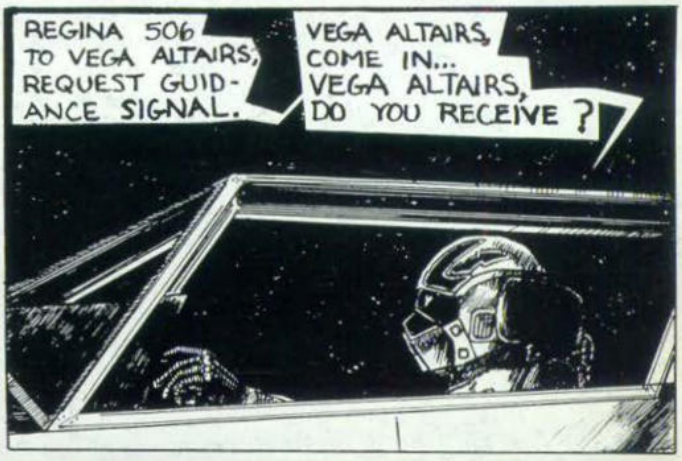
MODULES: If you bought a five-year membership, you should have received (by now) a letter from us with a list of modules from which you many select your free one. Have you sent it back? We're still missing a number of replies. We're going to have to put a cutoff date on this soon, so hurry up!

If you've ordered a published RPGA Module, be patient; R-1 is out, R-2 is at the printer's, but the others aren't ready yet. Your copy will come, but has been "back-ordered"; in other words, when it comes it, we send it out. Hang in there.

GRÆTSPEAR © 1982

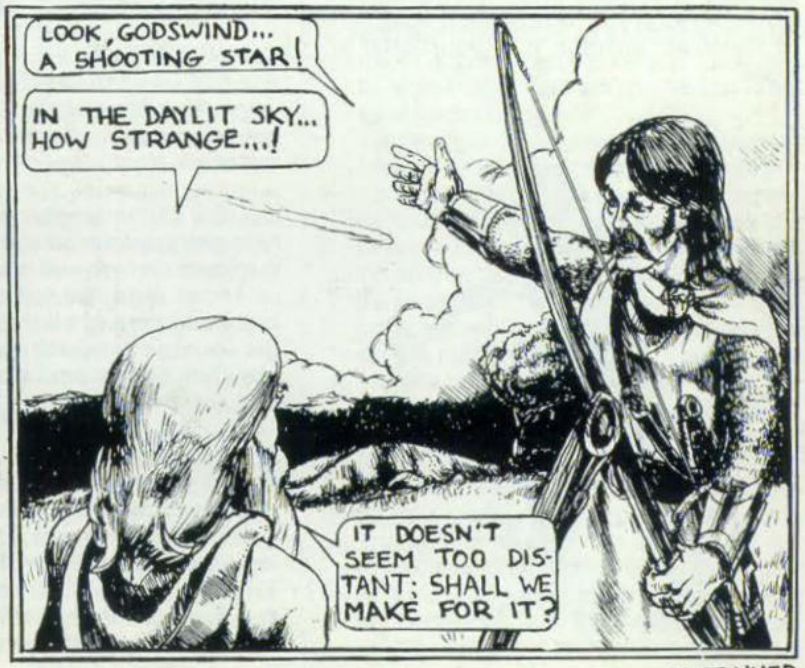






FRAK!! ALLIANCE INTERCEPTORS COMING ON. I WAS HOPING TO AVOID THIS... NO USE WAITING FOR A JUMP SIGNAL THAT MAY NEVER COME... I HAVE TO EVADE!

SCANNERS SHOW SHIP DRIFTING INTO PLANET'S GRAVITATIONAL FIELD. IT'S FINISHED... LET'S HEAD FOR HOME, I'M LOW ON FUEL.
AFFIRMATIVE... COMING ABOUT TO MARK 103.b.



CONTINUED